

# **System Configuration Team (SCT)**

## **Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26 Conference Call Notes June 17, 2004**

### ***Greetings and Introductions.***

The June 17 System Configuration Team meeting was held at NOAA Fisheries' offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NOAA Fisheries, who led a review of the agenda and asked that any comments on the draft minutes from the May 26 SCT meeting be submitted to him as soon as possible. The agenda and a list of attendees for the meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

### ***2. Update On Any New FFDRWG Actions or Information.***

This topic was not addressed at today's meeting.

### ***3. SRWG Update.***

Rock Peters said the ranking process for FY'05 studies is underway; he asked the states to fill in the blanks in their rankings and send them back to him as soon as possible. We still have a few one-pagers to review, he said; he asked the states to leave those out of their rankings for now. And what's the time-frame for the SRWG prioritization? Ron Boyce asked. We would like to be able to go to solicitation by Friday of next week, Peters replied. And will there be a chance to re-adjust things once the last few one-pagers are rewritten? Hevlin asked. Absolutely, Peters replied, adding that rankings have already been received from the tribes, BPA, NOAA Fisheries and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Peters said the Corps has now received two Joint Technical Staff letters, one on the Bonneville two-treatment test and one on what used to be called the summer spill evaluation, but is now called “Survival Studies Methodologies.” We will be collaborating with Chuck Pevin and others to ensure that we’re getting the right techniques involved in terms of late-summer subyearling evaluations, he said. Peters said the Corps will be issuing the first JTS letter later today; the Corps disagrees with the JTS findings and plans to proceed with a two-treatment test. The second JTS letter will be going out soon.

With respect to other 2004 studies, Peters said everything is going extremely well so far. The researchers have commented that the B2 corner collector is functioning unbelievably well, Peters said; the survival study at The Dalles is also going extremely well. There have been problems with the estuary study; the fixed-array installation has yet to detect a fish. The contractor has guaranteed to resolve the problem at its own expense in time for the 2005 outmigration. The next Portland District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for August 13.

#### ***4. Feasibility of Summer Lower Granite RSW Hydroacoustic Testing in 2004.***

Hevlin noted that a number of parties in the region have expressed an interest in a subyearling hydroacoustic study at the Lower Granite RSW this summer; there has been an exchange of letters, and the bottom line is that this is an ongoing issue. Tom Lorz said the salmon managers discussed hydroacoustic monitoring at the Lower Granite RSW earlier this year; the CRITFC member tribes had an interest in that proposal, but at some point it seems to have faded away. We still have some interest in seeing that go forward, he said, since we’re talking about installing RSWs at several additional dams. However, the Corps has said there is no funding available for such a study, said Lorz. I’m not sure where the SCT originally prioritized that study, he said, or even if it ever did so.

Several SCT members have consistently expressed support for the Lower Granite study, said Ron Boyce; it is a very important study, both in terms of the ongoing evaluation of the RSW technology and the summer spill study. We were very surprised that this item dropped off the CRFM spreadsheet for FY’04 without SCT input, Boyce said. Russ Kiefer said IDFG agrees with the ODFW and CRITFC positions on this issue. He asked that the SCT explore the technical, logistical and financial feasibility of conducting such a study in 2004.

Kiefer asked where the funds for the cancelled spring study at the Lower Granite RSW went. Also, he said, why didn’t we get an opportunity to rank the summer hydroacoustic evaluation at Lower Granite against the other studies that are being contemplated? Boyce noted that the director of ODFW himself has made assurances to the Oregon legislature that there is a strong commitment to study RSW technology, particularly in the summer – we have absolutely no information about how summer migrants respond to the RSW, given their lower guidance efficiency, he said. Hevlin and Woodin said NOAA Fisheries and WDFW, respectively, echo the concerns that have already been expressed on this issue.

With respect to where the money for the spring study went, John Kranda reminded the group that when SCT does its annual prioritization, it has essentially been stuffing 10 pounds of

potatoes into an eight-pound sack. We always have more projects than we have funding for, he said. This year, once again, we're overprogrammed; any funds that are freed up are applied to the next funding priority. There was no intent to circumvent the SCT process, he said; as more money becomes available, we simply try to plug the next hole on the list. The risk item this year was underfunding of the Ice Harbor RSW construction contract, Kranda said; I suspect the money from the spring study went there.

The \$3 million we originally had in the budget for summer hydroacoustic work at Lower Granite was discussed several SCT meetings ago, added Dana Knutsen; we talked about the possibility of doing radio-tag, rather than hydroacoustic, testing at that project this summer. You will recall that the low water year also had an impact on that discussion, he added. Actually, we agreed on a hydroacoustic study at Lower Granite, not a radio-tag study, said Hevlin. However, again, the drought compromised our ability to conduct a summer test, Knutsen replied. So we got one week of testing in the spring, then spill was shut off and the hydroacoustic contract was terminated at that point? Hevlin asked. Correct, replied Tim Wick; the money that was left over went into the Ice Harbor RSW contract. Still, I do not recollect any decision on the SCT's part to forsake the summer hydroacoustic test at Lower Granite, said Boyce. Turning on spill at Lower Granite during the summer would be a separate issue that the region has not even addressed, said Kranda.

The discussion continued in this vein for some minutes; ultimately, Hevlin observed that the SCT prioritization process isn't perfect. People have different recollections of how this line-item fell off the table, he said, but the fact is that it did. Now it has our attention again, he said, and the question is, what are our options for conducting a Lower Granite RSW hydroacoustic evaluation this summer? There may be some money in another part of the budget that has not yet been spent, he said; if we as a group feel some sort of subyearling evaluation is so important, then it is up to us to elevate it.

Ken Barnhart noted that one thing BPA has always wanted to evaluate is operating the RSW only – 6 Kcfs – with no training spill. Hevlin observed that, during a period when the average flow at Lower Granite is likely to be in the 30-40 Kcfs range, such a test could produce similar FGE results to those seen with the RSW plus 20 Kcfs training spill during the spring. The Corps expressed concern about putting the fish through a single bay at a time when water temperatures and predation are on the rise, without an accompanying survival study; Lorz replied that, given the SAR information for Snake River fish transported during the summer, the risks for a one-year test are acceptable. Hevlin noted that, by the time they reach Ice Harbor, 95% of the fish have been removed from the river and transported. At Lower Granite, the populations are still together, so the information that could potentially be gathered at that project is much more valuable.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, there was general agreement that a limited-period test of RSW-only spill this summer at Lower Granite would be a worthy first step toward acquiring information on subyearling response to the RSW technology. Barnhart said that, while he cannot commit to approving such an operation at today's meeting, he believes there would be interest within Bonneville in conducting such a test this summer. He asked the SCT to develop a

more fleshed-out testing proposal for BPA consideration.

The group discussed the logistical feasibility of conducting the study this summer. Tim Wick noted that the equipment needed to conduct the study is in place; however, at this point, the Corps has no funding for the study, and no contract is in place. With respect to the funding issue, Kranda noted that the Ice Harbor RSW contract is currently \$1.4 million in the hole; if we find any additional funding, we need to plug it into that contract, he said. Somewhere between \$250,000 and \$500,000 is needed for the Lower Granite evaluation this summer. So we would need to find \$2 million in savings somewhere in the CRFM spreadsheet if we want the test to go forward this summer? Boyce asked. That's correct, Kranda replied.

Kranda observed that, with RSW design and construction in the pipeline for Ice Harbor and Little Goose by 2007, there is some time to conduct biological testing next summer at Lower Granite. He questioned the need to significantly alter the FY'04 CRFM budget in order to conduct the test this year. The question, though, is whether there is something we could learn this summer that would improve those designs, said Boyce. It is useful to hear that we cannot fund the study this summer without terminating other work that is already well underway; however, I have heard nothing today that would say that doing this study this summer is technically infeasible, he added -- it's always possible that funding could be found from another source.

Ultimately, there was general agreement that CRFM funding is already locked down for the remainder of FY'04; any additional funds made available are already committed to the \$1.4 million deficit in funding for the Ice Harbor RSW contract. However, if a policy-level decision is made to conduct the study this summer, is it technically feasible? Boyce asked. Tim Wick replied that, if the money was made available, it may be possible to get a contract in place within a week, followed by a week for set-up. So if by some chance the funds were made available by the end of this week, David Wills observed, it might be possible to get the study up and running by July 1. It was agreed that Wick will make some calls to determine the availability of potential contractors for this study. It was further agreed that an SCT subcommittee will meet later this afternoon to develop a one-page research proposal for the summer hydroacoustic evaluation at the Lower Granite RSW. The one-pager will then be provided to the full SCT membership for review before it is submitted to the SRWG. Wick said he will facilitate the SRWG's review of the one-pager.

##### ***5. RSW Development and Installation Schedule for Little Goose, Lower Monumental and McNary Dams.***

Hevlin distributed a draft letter from the SCT to Kranda and Knutsen, dated June 17, on the subject of the multi-year accelerated RSW implementation schedule at Lower Monumental, Little Goose and McNary Dams. We promised we would summarize the discussion and agreement on this issue at the May SCT meeting in letter form, said Hevlin; this was the result.

Hevlin went briefly through the contents of the draft letter (Enc. C), then asked the SCT

to provide any comments they may have to him as soon as possible. The group offered a few clarifying questions and comments at today's meeting; Hevlin said he will incorporate these concepts in the final draft of the letter before sending it to the Corps. He asked that any additional comments be provided to him in the next day or two. In the meantime, said Kranda, we're working on a schedule that will allow us to put RSWs at Lower Monumental and Little Goose by 2007

#### ***6. Continued Discussion of FY'05 CRFM Program.***

Kranda distributed the most recent version of the FY'05 (and outyear) CRFM spreadsheet, dated June 17. He noted that the shading of each item represents its current priority, with the unshaded items being the highest priorities and the darkest-shaded items the lowest priorities. The total for FY'05, for the highest-priority items, is currently \$70.3 million; the total for everything on the list, plus potential add-ons, is \$94.5 million. The president has requested \$98 million; however, Congress has never appropriated the full amount of the president's request. We heard this morning that Congress has placed \$80 million for CRFM in its FY'05 budget, said Kranda. The high-priority list includes Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental RSW, but not Little Goose, he added. Hevlin thanked Kranda for his work on this spreadsheet, noting that it has become a very useful instrument for the SCT's deliberations.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the most recent version of the spreadsheet. Rod Woodin noted the current emphasis on surface collection in the Snake River, to maximize in-river migration; he noted that a true bypass/no collection option needs to be added to the Lower Granite juvenile bypass facility rebuild, sooner, rather than later. The facility is currently scheduled to be operational by 2008. So your point is that the Lower Granite juvenile bypass facility needs to be moved up, so it's finished by, say, 2007? Hevlin asked. Correct, Woodin replied. It was agreed to take up the discussion of FY'05 CRFM priorities at this point at the next SCT meeting.

#### ***7. Next SCT Meeting Date.***

The next System Configuration Team meeting was set for Thursday, July 15. The August meeting was scheduled for August 26. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.